WHY GHOSTS ARE FEARED

M. A. Lane Attempts a Scientific Explanation of Strange and Interesting Subject.

WOMEN SEE MORE GHOSTS

Belief in Supernatural Visita tions Is Somehow Related to the Ability to Perceive Colors.

ghosts? There is no doubt that peo ple generally have a great fear of This belief is one of the most ancient and firmly established of human convictions. Laugh at it as you may, yet there it is-a fact indisputable! No matter what a man's training has been, he cannot truthfully say that he is not afraid of ghosts, or at least he cannot truthfully say that there never was a time when he was afraid of them. All men, without exception, have been at one or another time of their lives victims of this popular dread.

Now, if one admits that ghosts really exist and occasionally manifest themselves to the eyes and ears of men in the flesh the answer is easy. Men are afraid of ghosts for the same reason they are afraid of any other thing that threatens to do them harm. They fear ghosts because ghosts are believed to work injury to human beings in the flesh. But let us assume that ghosts have no existence; that the belief in them is merely a popular delusion How account for this popular delusion in a manner that will satisfy the rational mind?

A moment's thought will convince any one that the popular belief is really a delusion. A woman recently informed me that she had seen her father's spirit at a seance, and she told me of the good advice it had given her. She was a woman of unusual intelligence and education, one widely and publicly known in this community. I asked her whether her father's spirit had worn a costume of any kind.

O, yes, she had replied. He had worn the same black coat he loved to wear during life and the same old style plaited shirt and black silk tie.

Of course, I did not push the questions, but it occurred to me to wonder whether the coat, shirt, and tie were ghosts of coat, shirt and tie, and how the ghost of this woman's father had managed to get them. Was the spirit supplied with ghost wardrobes stored with ghost clothes? Did ghost clothes wear out, and were they made of ghost silk, linen, cotton, and wool? Were shirts laundered in the spirit world, and what would a poor ghost gentleman do were he to lose his collar button? unless we assume that there are ghost factories, ghost mines, ghost notion stores, ghost railroads and all the rest of the entire mechanism of industry.

It would have been futile to put such questions to this woman, for the absurdity of her belief which they imply would have totally escaped her. But the point to be brought out by this incident is not the absurdity of the belief, but the important fact that while this woman firmly believed in the existence of ghosts she was not in the slightest degree afraid of them! And she was not afraid because she was a civilized woman and at the same time an old one.

Here now is a clew by which certain anthropologists lay claim to having rationally accounted for the fear of ghosts that is universal with men for if the woman above mentioned had never gone to a spirit seance, and hence had never seen what purported to be her father's spirit, she probably would have as little belief in ghosts as the average woman or man of her own age, whereas the fact of her age had removed her fear even in spite of her strong belief induced by the doings at the seance.

Anthropologists have a theory that the children of civilized society have much the same beliefs and fears that mark the minds of mature savages. Tennyson says that the "gray barbarian" is "lesser than the Christian child." Anthropologists hold much the same opinion; and a great mass of scientific literature has been produced to prove the truth of the contention. The theory will assuredly commend itself to any one who gives it even the most casual investigation; and it can hardly be denied that this theory accounts in the most satisfactory way for the peculiar facts concerning the belief in and the fear of ghosts among civilized peoples. Mature or aged civilized men have little belief in ghosts. Mature civilized women still retain a compar-

atively strong belief and fear in that to Salem, will be in operation between respect; but women, according to the Portland and the Sandy. The line has views of both anatomists and an- been surveyed and is ready for crossthropologists, are, as a general rule, sectioning. The work south from Portmore closely akin to children than are land will be pushed rapidly the winter men in both their mental and physical season not stopping the progress. omposition.

Putting these important facts to gether, the man of science can see some significant conclusions emerging men and women alike are proverbially less impressed with the fear of and belief in chosts than are their chil iren. The "bogey man" is a powerfully vital fact in the child mind although grownups take little stock in it. Again, all savages, mature as well as young, are thorough believers in ghosts and bogey men of every description The savage mind is filled with fears of every imaginable supernatural Discovery for Consumption. The bene-Why is it that people are afraid of kind. So is the mind of the child of civilized society. The minds of mature civilized men and women are impressed with comparatively little fear and

> teresting fact? If it could be shown, for example that the ancestors of civilized men were at one time precisely like the savages of today; that the most highly developed tribes of the human race had passed, in their evolution upwards, through the state in which we find the savages of the present, the problem would seem to be clearing itself. And if it could be further shown that each individual of a race, in its growth from its beginning onward to its maturity, passes through all the lower stages of the life growth of the race itself-then the close resemblance of the civilized child to the mature savage would be

perfectly understood. And such, to be perfectly frank about the matter, is the conviction of biologists, from whom anthropologists have borrowed the idea in order to account not only for the belief in and fear of ghosts but for many other beliefs, fears, and customs which, upon their surface, seem mysteriously commonplace and unaccountable

Were it not for this innate, this inherited fear of ghosts, children could not be afraid of them. Children, just like savages, are in many respects the most hardened skeptics imaginable. They are not open to conviction upon any matter which does not directly appeal to their imagination. They will believe the most monstrous fable only be it clothed in an alluring garb; whereas the most obviously forcible truth, if it appeal more to the intellect than to the imagination, will have no effect whatsoever upon their lively, resilient, and shallow minds. In just the degree in which the man is primitive will his beliefs be akin to the beliefs of the child and of the say

The belief in ghosts seems to go hand in hand with the power of perceiving shades in color. Prof. Rivers of Cambridge has recently investigated the color perception of savages and comes to the conclusion that the savage is unable to distinguish between blue and gray. He finds also that in savages the perception of red is keenest; that say ages have words for red, but not for blue; and Gladstone long ago proved that such was the case with the Greeks of the heroic age. In the classic age Greek sculptors painted blue the beards of their statues. Color perceptions in children have been found to resemble those of savages. These facts, taken into consideration with the intense be liefs of the Greeks in animated nature add new evidence to the strength of the ghost theory above outlined.

In fact anthropologists seem to hold that the people of Europe have made considerable progress anatomically and physiologically during the last 2000 years and less. This would seem to promise that the belief in ghosts-even among children-is doomed, and at a not distant time in the future. The time will hence come when every little boy will be his own Huxley-unafraid of bogey man, ghost, or witch with the evil eye .- M. A. Lane in Tacoma Sunday Ledger,

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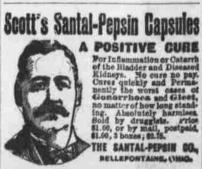
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